

# DO WE REALLY HATE OUR JOBS? DETERMINANTS OF JOB SATISFACTION IN ROMANIA

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*Job satisfaction is said to be an important factor of productivity at work along with having the proper training, interests and motivation. Frustrations at work may derive from different aspects of the job itself, the work environment as well as personal motivation for work and its results. Human resources management theories focus on job satisfaction and motivations as means for achieving the institution's objectives, and consequently see motivations and satisfaction at an individual level. Our paper investigated these issues at macro level, going beyond the individual variables of job satisfaction to the ones that explain the attitudes towards work at national level. This approach is derived from cultural theories analyzing attitudes towards work as a cultural value that varies across nations. In this manner we analyze data at national level, investigating the factors that influence work satisfaction and attitudes towards work of Romanians.*

*This paper aims at explaining the identified differences regarding the individual's attitude towards their professional life. Considering the fact that work occupies a lot of time in people's life and it is considered the second most important aspect of life after family, we questioned the aspects that explain the levels of job satisfaction both in the light of theoretical constructs and as results on the Romanian population. These indexes have a direct impact on the quality of life, reflect the level of development, as well as point to further social aspirations of individual actors. The current analysis reflects on different aspects of the appreciation of work and investigates variations of work satisfaction: Which is the value attributed to work? How important is work and how satisfied are individuals with their jobs? Which are the characteristics that determine variations of job satisfaction?*

*After a theoretical synthesis of different approaches of work related attitudes in the literature, the second section presents the data and the main research findings. For data analysis we used the data obtained in the European Values Survey 2008, research conducted by the Romanian group for the study of social values, supported by the Research Institute for Quality of Life. Other data used in this paper derived from a research program developed at University of Oradea – Social Sciences Faculty - HURO 0801/180 ENRI. The research section of this paper follows the theoretical questions: first we focus on the value attributed to work by Romanians and its contribution to self definition, then reflect on the significations of work, and finally explain the levels of work satisfaction. The main findings of our analysis suggest that even though work is seen as very important by Romanians, the main explanatory factor of job satisfaction at a general level is connected to economical status provided by a certain job. In the concluding section we stated several research directions that would provide better insight in this topic.*

*Keywords: appreciation of work, job satisfaction,*

*JEL codes: M12, O15, J89*

## **Theoretical aspects**

The analysis regarding work motivation and satisfaction derives from two general lines: the first one is in connection with work theories: work psychology and sociology, management, especially human resources management which deals with individuals and the effects of professional

activities of the individuals over the institutions in which they are performing their activities. The second dimension is in connection with the analysis of economical policies, different work indicators (incomes, work hours, professional training, satisfaction, commitment to the organization) being taken into consideration for measuring the well-being of the citizens and also for doing evaluations and comparisons between countries. We are going to present the general elements and results of the researches from both directions in order to point out their importance and interdependence. A general analysis of all attitude co-variables regarding the job has to contain both individual and organizational characteristics of the field of activity and also the ones from the macro-social level, like the political-economical environment; the effects of satisfaction/dissatisfaction towards the job can also be found in all of these three levels.

From the first approach category regarding work, it is important the classical distinction between the types of work motivations are based on intrinsic-extrinsic classification. The individual characteristics, like responsibility (the feeling that own work is important), autonomy, the possibility of usage and development of own abilities etc. belong to the first category, these being stable characteristics in time, from which the perceived professional life quality's appreciation derives. Extrinsic motivational factors contain all kinds of rewards and penalties: bonuses, promotion, criticism, wage diminishing (Armstrong: 2009). The types of motivations that act upon the individuals are important for the work satisfaction: a motivated person who gains the awaited work benefits (be it intrinsic or extrinsic) is satisfied by the undertaken professional activity. Motivation can be defined as "the sum of forces, internal and external energies which initialize and lead the behavior towards an objective, which once fulfilled determines the satisfaction of a need", in other words, work satisfaction is directly influenced by the satisfaction of motivational needs (Abrudan: 2009). Thus, the level of satisfaction can be influenced by opportunities, independence, relationship with co-workers, communication with the superiors, success obtained in the field of work etc. Money is the most direct and obvious type of motivation, not because of its intrinsic value, but for the things that can be achieved with it: social prestige and position, access to superior goods and resources. Contrary to a general and accepted perception by the common sense, the studies do not demonstrate a direct relationship between work satisfaction and performance, the relationship having the possibility of being inversely: an individual who gets to high performances consequently is going to be satisfied by his/her work (Judge et al., 2010), element taken into consideration in the previous analysis of the authors regarding evaluation of work performances (Saveanu, Osvat, Saveanu 2010: 706). Even though, motivating the employees is important for the managers for achieving organizational objectives, for creating a positive work environment, low absenteeism etc. (Mathis: 1997, apud Abrudan: 2009). Even though, it is important to keep the conceptual differences between work attitude, work satisfaction in subjective terms and work evaluation based on objective criteria, distinctions kept in the analysis in this paper (Weiss 2002).

In the present paper we are going to investigate the existing connection between work motivation types, work perception declared by the subjects and their effect on work satisfaction. The question to which we are trying to answer is: *to what extent does the work satisfaction level vary according to the following motivational factors: income, work position, freedom for decisions, occupations?* The data did not allow the investigation of the relationship between this and the aspects from the institutional level in which they are performing their activities, even though the theories present their relevance.

The second direction for investigating the attitudes toward work is a macro-social one, emphasizing the general social characteristics, the attitude towards work being a social indicator which can be aggregated to different levels (Seashor and Taber 1975). Most of the analysis in this category are connected to the rate of occupation, rate of unemployment, salary incomes,

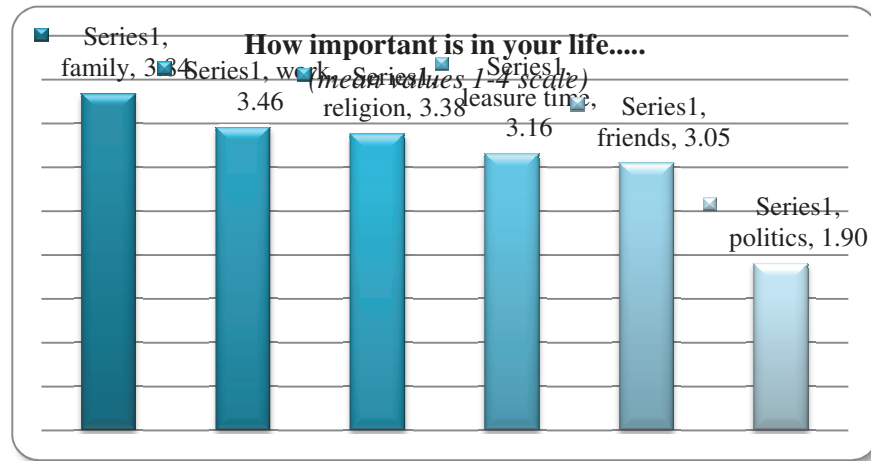
average period of work, fields of professional activity etc. This data is also completed by the subjective indicators of life quality, just like the perceived satisfaction regarding work, the value given to the job. These dimensions are the ones that build up the objective of the present paper. Thus, the comparative analysis between Romania and other European countries has revealed the fact that Romanians are generally less satisfied with the job, less sure regarding their job, a fact explained through the structure of the labor force and also through the rate of occupancy of the active population in our country (Ciutacu 2008: 59-108). Other factors that explain the work satisfaction degree of the Romanians are: age (young and old), education and occupation (those with a superior educational and/or occupational level are more satisfied) (Comsa, 2009: 1). The type of employment is also a factor that influences work satisfaction, the owners being the most satisfied ones according to a representative study on a national level (Comsa 2008: 46 - 48). These relationships are going to be tested in the present paper for highlighting the factors that influence work attitude and the degree of satisfaction on macro-social level, as social indexes of well-being and of development level. Nevertheless, the present analysis did not allow the comparison with the results obtained in these countries, being more an investigation on a national level of the aspects regarding work.

### **Data and methodology**

The objective of this paper is the investigation of the variation of work valuing and of work satisfaction. For obtaining the results, I have used the data of the EVS 2008 survey. The 2008 research performed by the Romanian group for studying social values, sustained by the *Life Quality Research* (ICCV) Institute, had as objective the evaluation of the values' dynamics of the Romanians. The study is part of the surveys known as *European Values Study* (EVS) and has as objective the comparison of values between different European countries and the presentation of the evolution in time of the values' orientation (for more information regarding the EVS study in Romania, go to [www.iccv.ro/valori](http://www.iccv.ro/valori)). The representative sample for the Romanian population involved 1489 subjects. The structure of the sample is the following: distribution according to gender -51.8 women, 48.2 men, average age of 46.4 years, with a standard deviation of 18.3. The data has been processed by the authors by using the SPSS statistics software.

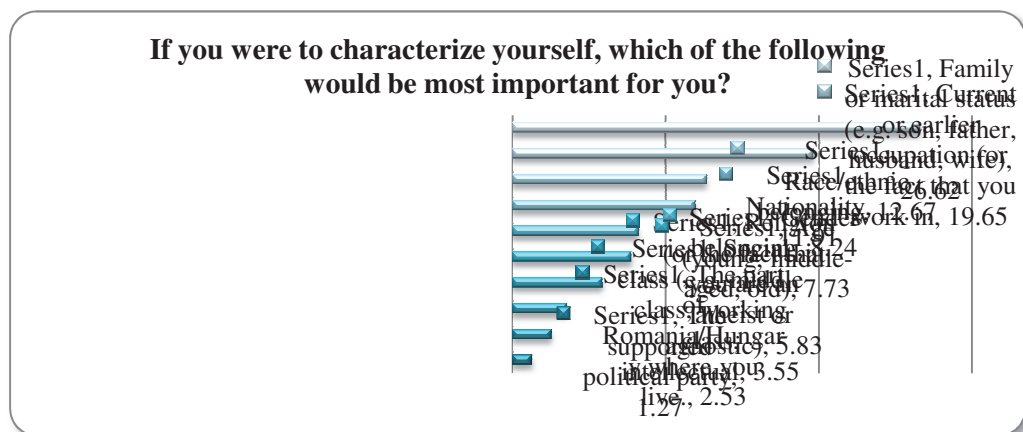
### **Results**

Taking into consideration life as a whole, for the Romanian population, according to its importance, work is on the second place, the first place being allocated to family. This aspect shows that, in Romania, work is a desideratum, all the more so as the lack of work is one of the identified factors in previous studies as a determinant for social exclusion. Employing in professional life contributes to the satisfaction of the need for rising and to personal development of the individuals. A comparative analysis in European countries highlighted the fact that Romania belongs to the countries which value work the most, this appreciation presenting a constant trend in the last 20 years (Comsa: 2009).



**Graphic 1. The importance of work attribution, made by the author, data source: EVS 2008**

What is important to highlight regarding work appreciation is the fact that work represents one of the defining aspects of the individuals' identity. According to a research performed by the collective of the Sociology desk, University of Oradea (HURO 0801/180 ENRI), work does not only occupy an important place in the life of the individuals, but it also defines them as persons: the subjects answered the *Which is the most important thing that describes who you are?* question by 19% declaring (on the second place after family) that work is what defines them.



**Graphic 2. Appreciation of the defining characteristics of social identity, made by the author, data source: ENRI 2010**

Taking into consideration these aspects hereinafter, we are going to investigate which is the value given to work by the Romanians. The five items presented in the table below are in reference to the appreciation of the role and place held by the job:

**Table 1. Work appreciation (5 points scale: 1- totally agree, 5 – totally disagree)**

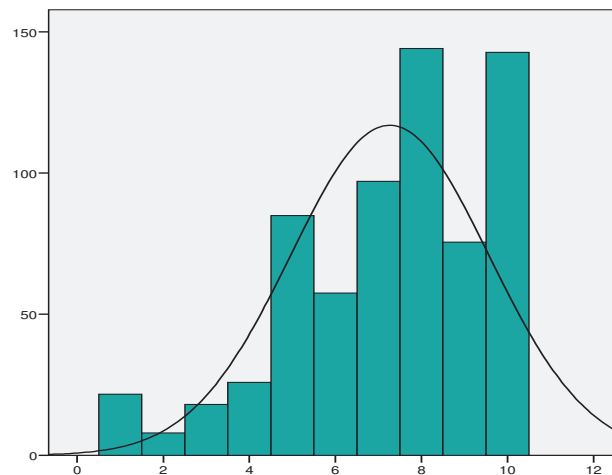
	N		Average	Std. Deviation
	Valid	Missing		
You must have a job in order to make the most of your abilities	1453	39	1.77	,78
It is humiliating to receive money without working for it	1456	37	2.28	1.15
People who do not work become lazy	1436	57	1.98	,95
Work is a duty to society.	1429	63	2.47	1.14
Work always has to be on first place, even if it means less free time	1450	43	2.36	1.08

The centrality of work is also confirmed in the case of these items. Most of the individuals consider that work gives them the possibility to prove their abilities and keeps them active.

The fidelity of the scale is thus confirmed (cronbach alpha>.700), by using the inverted variants of the items, we have developed the index for work appreciation, having an average value of 19.1. High index values show a strong valuing of work.

The analysis regarding the variations of the work appreciation index did not show specific characteristics of the individuals which determine different levels of the valuing of work. We had a positive correlation only in the case of age (Pearson coef. .166\*\*, sig. 000), thus older people value work more. One of the possible explanations for the lack of significant relationships can be found in the way the scale has been built. It can be seen that the scale uses codes from 1 to 5, where 1 stands for a positive appreciation. Even though we used inverted values for developing the index, it is possible that the answers given to these items to be distorted due to the used codes (downward orientation).

Another way to interpret the lack of characteristics which determine the variation of the value given to work by the individuals is found in the subject of the measurement. The used scale measures the importance, the value of work and, as we could see in the first section of the paper, work is the most important after family. Thus, the appreciation of work's value does not represent different variations according to social-demographic characteristics of the individuals and their involvement in professional life. Also, the items use the word "work", word that does not directly refer to the job of the individuals, but rather to the involvement in different activities. Further on we have tested the identification of the characteristics which determine the variation of work satisfaction. Using the scale with values from 1 to 10 (1 - unsatisfied), the average value of work satisfaction is 7.26 with a standard deviation of 2.3. The previous comparative analysis place Romania on the 18th place from a total of 21 European countries, showing a lower level of satisfaction regarding work (see Comsa: 2009). Work satisfaction does not present significantly different variations according to age, gender and level of instruction of the individuals.



**Graphic 3. Histogram Job satisfaction, data source: EVS 2008**

The analysis shows a higher degree of satisfaction in the case of subjects with a superior occupational level, both regarding the type of employment and what this implies: the level of incomes and work position.

The tested relationship between the degree of work satisfaction and the level of incomes shows the major impact of income over the work appreciation. Thus, one of the major criteria according to which a job is evaluated is the salary. The positive value of the correlation coefficient is of Pearson coef. .235\*\*, sig. 000.

The difference is significant regarding the type of employment. The average value of work satisfaction is higher in the case of self-employed individuals: 8.25, in comparison to the 7.29 average value obtained for those who are employed ( $F=9.7$ , sig<005).

Also regarding the type of employment, the Levene Test for the equality of the variance shows a significant difference regarding the number of subordinates an individual has. Thus, the average value of work satisfaction is higher for those who have subordinates, compared to those who do not have subordinates (7.91 in comparison to 7.17:  $F=6.31$ , sig<005).

Also, in the case of decision making freedom degree, the analysis identifies a significant relationship. Thus, the positive correlation coefficient shows higher levels of work satisfaction if a job implies a high decision making power (Pearson coef. .572\*\*, sig. 000).

Another aspect investigated by the paper deals with testing the relationships regarding the type of professions. For coding the professions, the *Classification of Professions from Romania 2011* (COR) was used, recoding the professions in the database on the 10 major occupation group: (1) Members of the legislative body of the executive, heads of public administration, superior chiefs and officers from economical-social and political units; (2) Specialists with intellectual and scientific professions; (3) Technicians, fitters and assimilates; (4) Administrative officers; (5) Operative agents in services, commerce and assimilates; (6) Farmers and qualified workers in agriculture, forestry and fishing; (7) Craftsmen and qualified workers in crafts, adjustment and maintenance of machines and installations; (8) Operators for installations and machines and assemblers of machines, equipment and other products; (9) Unqualified workers; (0) Army forces. The analysis shows significant differences in case of intellectual professions and administrative officers. Thus, the average value of work satisfaction in the case of subjects with intellectual professions is higher in comparison to the average value of the other occupations (8.00 in comparison to 7.20:  $F=4.26$ , sig<005). Regarding administrative officers, the average value of work satisfaction is 7.73, compared to 7.15 recorded for the other professions ( $F=5.56$ , sig<005). These results are consistent with the average levels of salaries for these professional



groups: the second salary level group is represented by the intellectual and scientific professions, thus it is possible that the obtained significant differences to also come from the income differences of these (INS, 2010).

### Final discussion

The analysis presented in this paper contributes to the larger understanding of the work motivations and satisfactions of the Romanians, as an index of both well-being and of development level. In the same manner as other studies regarding this issue, I have shown that for the Romanians, work is a very important dimension, second after family, the professional status being an important criteria in shaping personal identity. The analysis regarding work valuing, with other words the role of work, sustains the conclusion that this represents an essential dimension of life, even if it is important to draw a line between involvement in professional life and involvement in different other activities outside work.

These results generated the analysis performed in the following section, the investigation of work satisfaction level of the Romanians. Their conclusion shows the fact that, even if work by itself is considered as being very important, satisfaction is connected to incomes, chief status, self-employment, high decision making power, intellectual and administrative professions - all of these showing a superior occupational level.

Further investigations are necessary for testing the direction of determination between work satisfaction level and achieved performances. For these, it is necessary to obtain information regarding the type of employer, work relationships and other institutional level indexes. This way, the individual level is averaged to the macro-social one, making generalizations possible.

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